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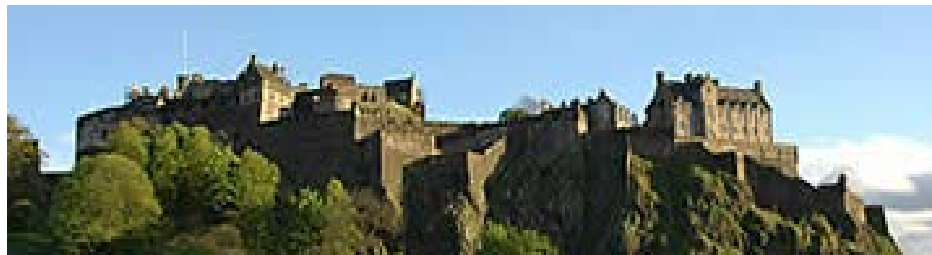


How evidence is used: implications for thinking about quality

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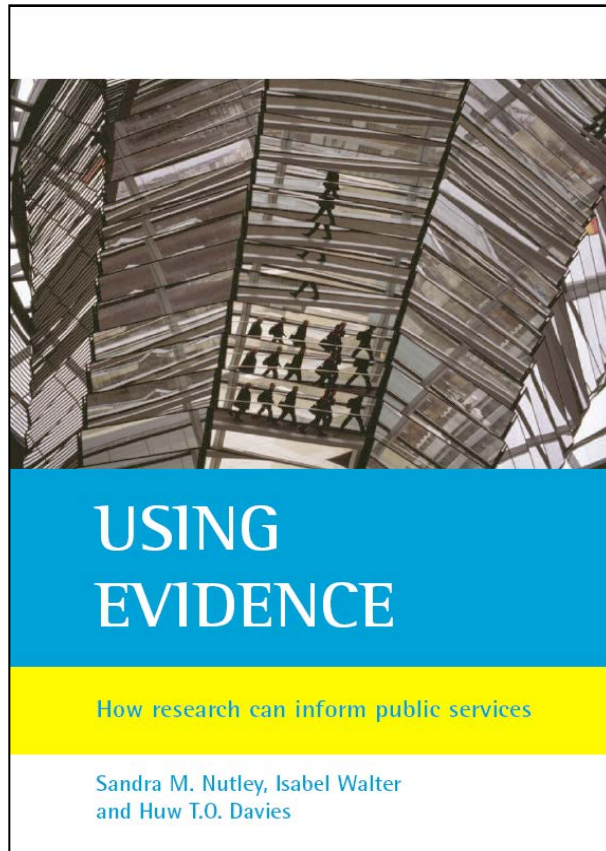


Different ways
evidence is used

What quality
means to users of
research

Implications for
increasing
research use/
impact





"Anyone who has ever written or utter the words 'evidence-based policy' should read this outstanding book." (Carol Weiss, Harvard)

"This book is a major contribution to the literature: clear, thoughtful, relevant and evidence-informed." (Tom Rundall, UC Berkeley)

Using Evidence: How research can inform public services

(Nutley, Walter and Davies, Policy Press, 2007)

Diverse forms of knowledge and evidence

- Research & evaluation reports
- Audit & inspection findings/data
- Routine monitoring data/KPIs
- Local & international exemplars
- Costings data
- Client & user experience data
- Expert views & insider knowledge
- Opinion polls & stakeholder consults
- System capacity & implementation issues
- Models & forecasts

Research and evidence

Research only one form of evidence

But...

Research offers more than “evidence”

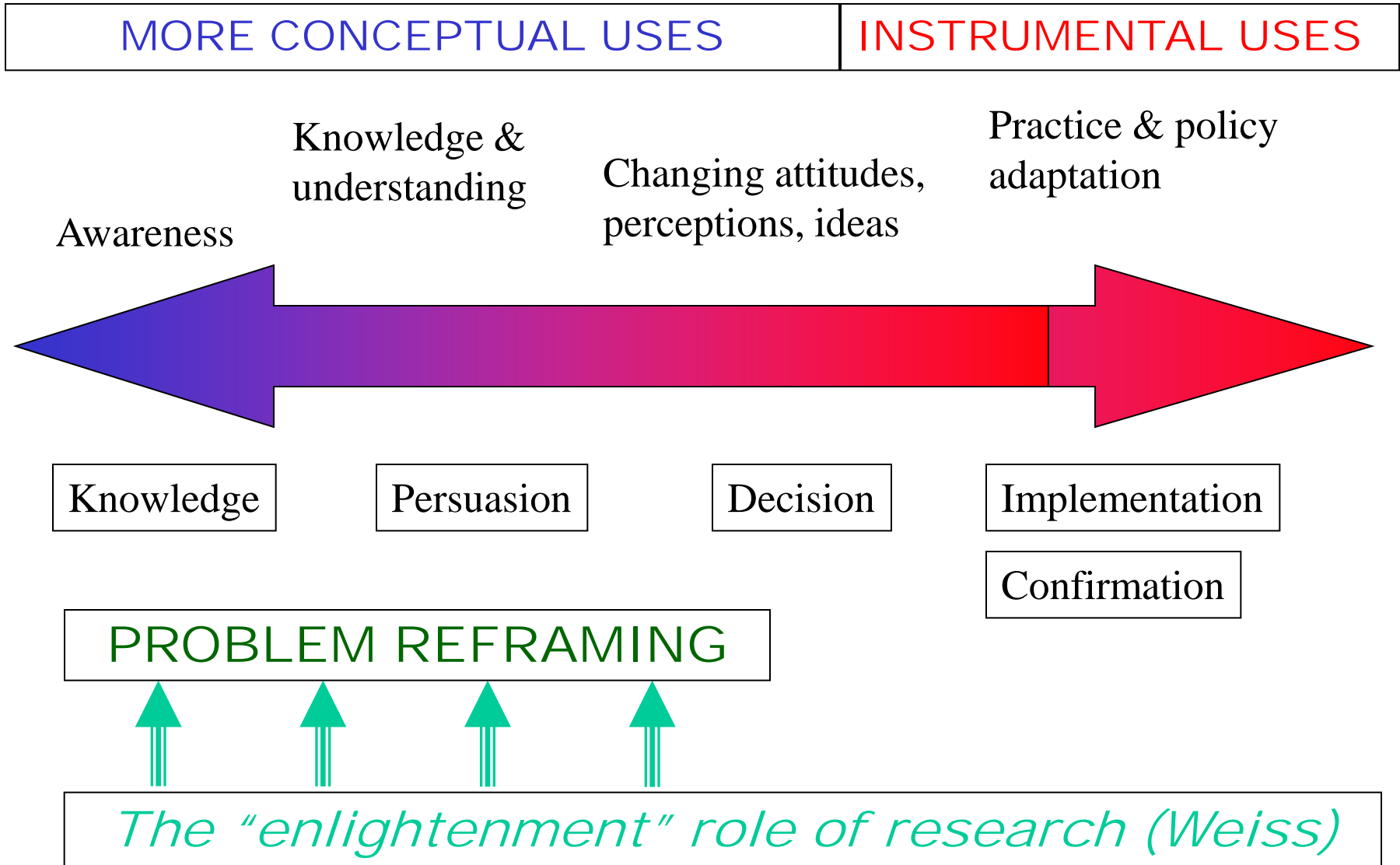
- Analytical capacity
- Theoretical insight
- Critique and challenge

1. Different ways evidence is used

Evidence helps to address:

- Know-about (problems)
- Know-what (works)
- Know-how (to put into practice)
- Know-who (to involve)
- Know-why (requirements of action)

An evidence use continuum:



“Enlightenment use”: promoting new ways of thinking...

*Service user
engagement...*

*Importance
of informal
carers...*

Decarceration policies...

*Patient
safety...*

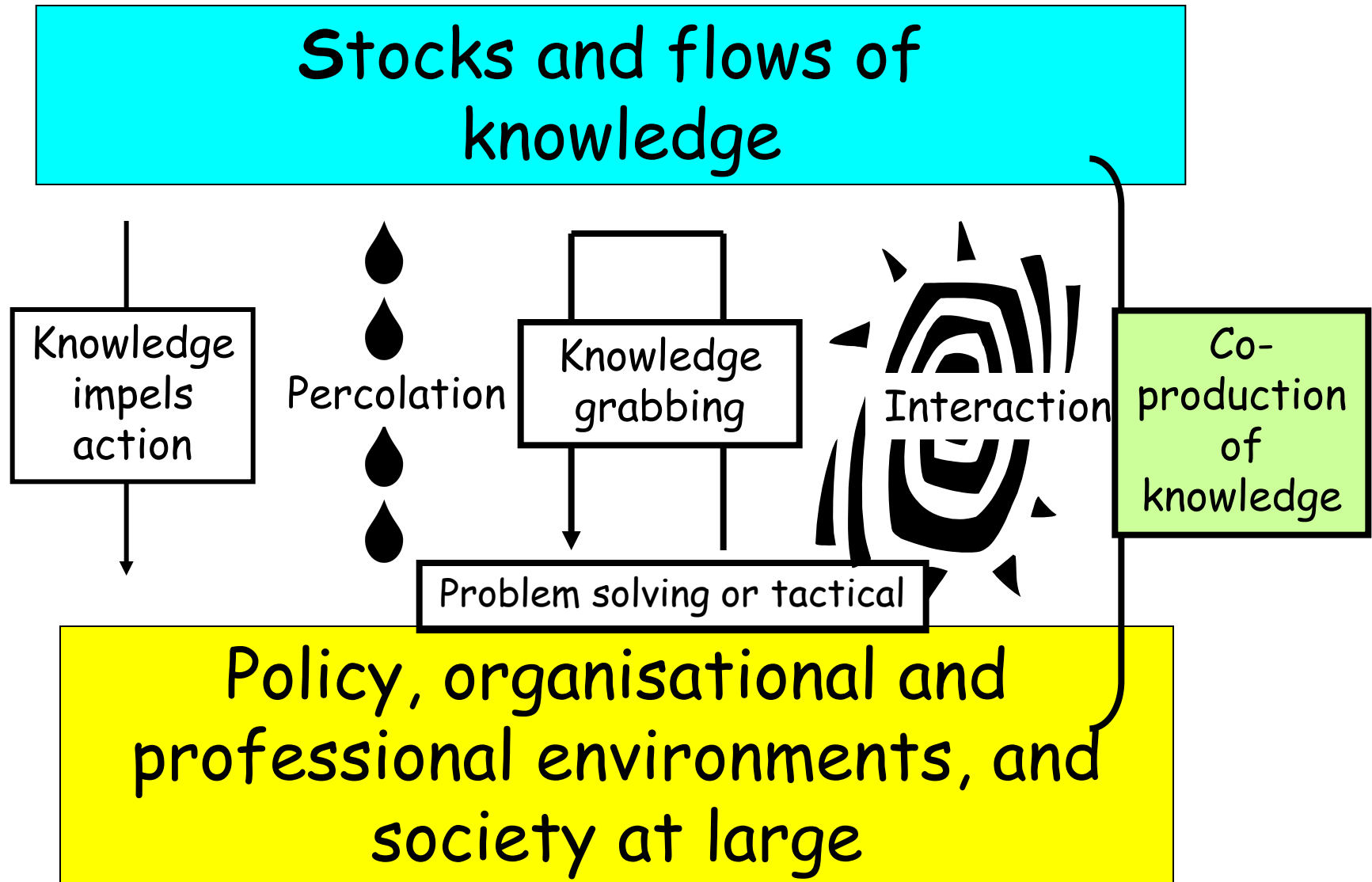


*The happiness
and well-being
agenda...*

*Enhancing
self-care...*

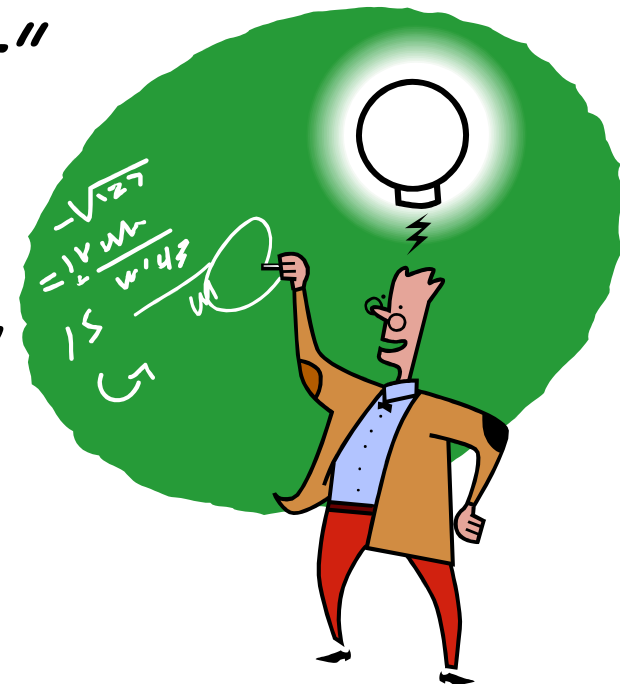
*Harm reduction
in substance
misuse...*

Many different ways of 'using' evidence:



Researchers *not disinterested* in all this

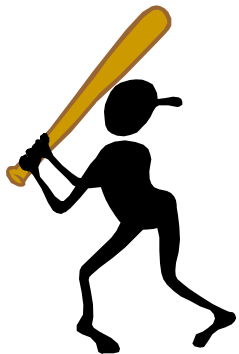
- The *consensual* approach - working *with the grain* of current policy
- The *contentious* approach - "*keeping the system honest*"
- *Paradigm challenging* - *subverting current thinking* and perhaps proposing new principles for action



Evidence use is complex – because 'policy making' is complex

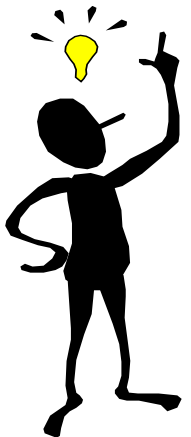
SOMETIMES:

- clearly defined event
- explicit decisions
- conscious deliberation
- defined policies
- policy fixed at implementation



OFTENTIMES:

- ongoing process
- piecemeal: no single decision
- muddling through
- policies emerge and accrete
- shaped through implementation



Role of evidence varies:

Engineered solutions vs *Emergent impacts*

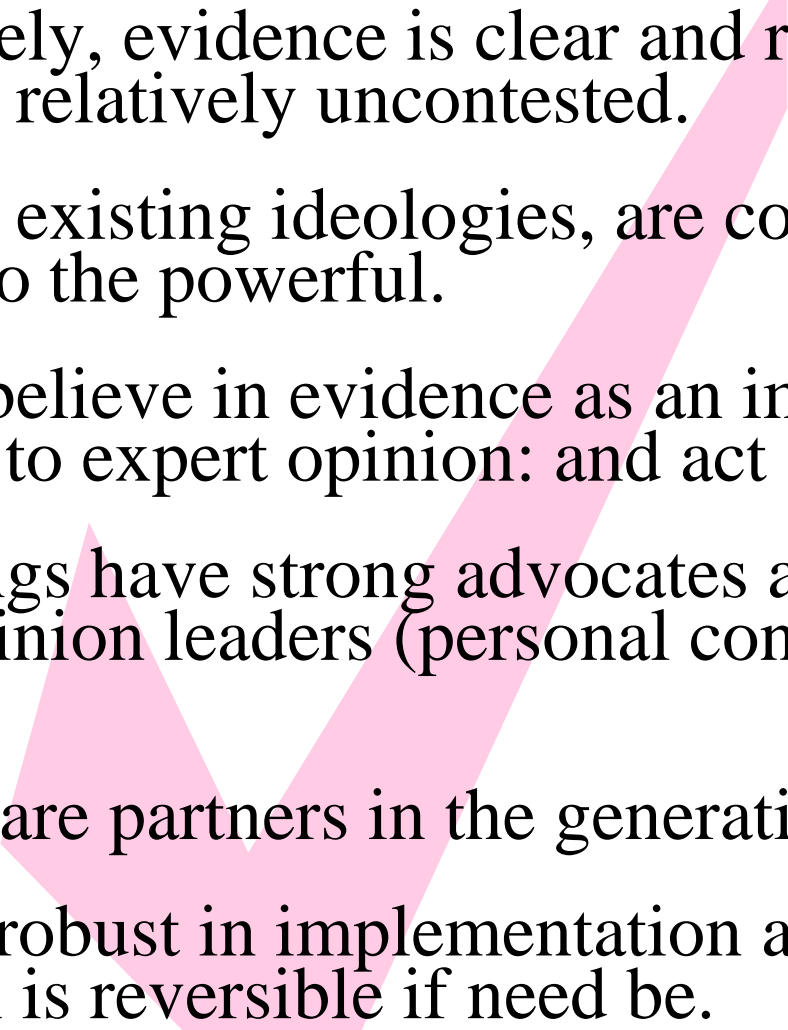
2. What quality means to
users of research

Policy Makers' Hierarchy of Evidence

- 'Experts' evidence (incl. consultants and think tanks)
- Opinion-based evidence (incl. lobbyists/pressure groups)
- Ideological 'evidence' (party think tanks, manifestos)
- Media evidence
- Internet evidence
- Lay evidence (constituents', citizens' experiences)
- 'Street' evidence (urban myths, conventional wisdom)
- Cabbie's evidence
- Research Evidence

Source: Phil Davies, 2007

Attention IS paid to research when:

- Research is timely, evidence is clear and relevant, and the methodology is relatively uncontested.
 - Results support existing ideologies, are convenient and uncontentious to the powerful.
 - Policy makers believe in evidence as an important counterbalance to expert opinion: and act accordingly.
 - Research findings have strong advocates and are endorsed by opinion leaders (personal contact is most effective).
 - Research users are partners in the generation of evidence.
 - The results are robust in implementation and implementation is reversible if need be.
- 

Users' perspectives on quality

- **Fitness for purpose is key** (inc. timeliness, accessibility and relevance to issue at hand)
- **Source a proxy for quality** (attention more likely to be paid to evidence from trusted sources)
- **Persuasiveness not necessarily a function of methodology** (e.g. clear implications, a good story, rhetorical presentation)

3. Implications for increasing research use/ impact

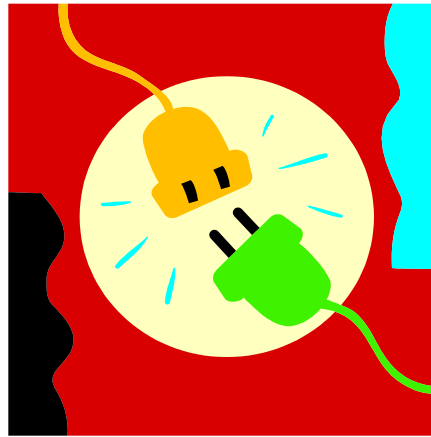


Yes, it's quite a noise - but are we having any impact?

Improving research use: addressing supply, demand, and that in between

Improving stocks or reservoirs of research knowledge (nb beyond methods)

*Increasing
intermediation*



*Knowledge
exchange*

*Increasing demand in political and
professional worlds, and wider society*



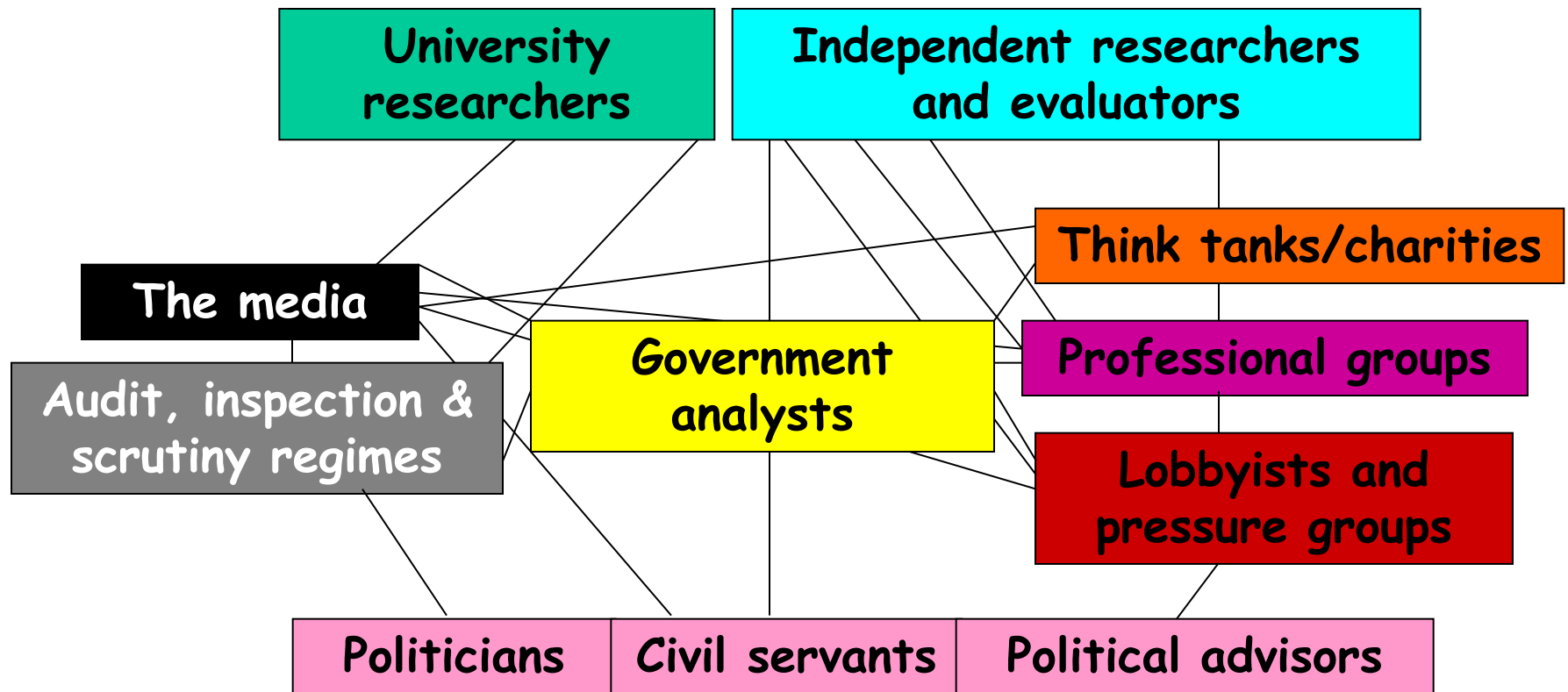
Improving research use: addressing supply, demand, and that in between

Improving stocks or reservoirs of research knowledge

Research translation, knowledge management and knowledge pools, research brokering and boundary spanning, co-location, secondments and role cycling, partnerships of all kinds, sustained interactivity...

Increasing demand in political and professional worlds, and wider society

Challenges: many active players in complex policy networks



Opening up to polyphony, loosening control, tolerating diverse views on 'evidence'... FLUIDITY

Some conclusions

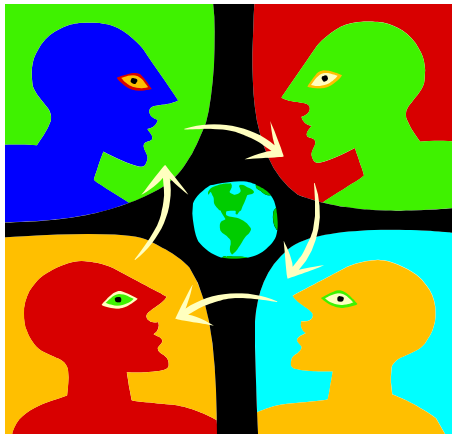
- Many sources and forms of evidence that serve diverse purposes, and are used in different ways
- Quality for research users is more about usefulness than methodological rigour
- Interactive models of research use are helpful



Interactive models of research use



Moving away from ideas of 'packaging' knowledge and enabling knowledge transfer - recognising instead:



- The importance of *context*;
- *Interaction* with other types of knowledge (tacit; experiential);
- Multi-voiced *iterative dialogue*;
- 'Use' as a *process* not an event.

Thank You

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